

Report CAOR-CS-01-14

To: Chair Pringle and Members of Corporate Services Committee
From: Lance Thurston, Chief Administrative Officer
Meeting Date: February 11, 2014
Subject: **County Library System Feasibility Review**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CS21-14 February 11, 2014; See also Resolution CS22-14 for further direction; Endorsed by County Council March 4, 2014 per Resolution CC34-14;

Recommendation

WHEREAS County Council directed the Chief Administrative Officer to undertake a preliminary assessment of the merits of proceeding with a comprehensive study into the feasibility of creating a county library system or a county-wide library card system;

AND WHEREAS the CAO has met with municipal officials, the CEOs and Chairs of local library boards in Grey County, representatives of the Southern Ontario Library Service, reached out to neighbouring counties for information and insights, and conducted independent research;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Report CAOR-CS-01-14 of the Chief Administrative Officer be received and the recommendation not to proceed with a county library feasibility study be endorsed;

AND FURTHER THAT County Council encourages local municipal councils and their public library boards to work together towards a shared integrated information management partnership to improve the scope of and access to library services available to residents across the County.

Origin

At its meeting on August 6, 2013, County Council passed the following resolution:

“THAT the request from the Council of West Grey dated July 3, 2013 for the County to study the feasibility of implementing a county-wide public library system or county-wide public library reciprocal card system be acknowledged and referred to the Chief Administrative Officer for a preliminary report to the Corporate Services Committee in accordance with the County’s approved Collaborative Decision-making Framework.”

It is understood that the primary aim of the request from West Grey Council is to enable greater uniformity of and equitable access to library services throughout the county, regardless of the local municipality in which a person resides. The request and County Council’s direction are not motivated to save money primarily, but rather to improve access to service. If in the process, however, cost efficiencies can be realized through alternative service arrangements, then that would be a welcomed secondary outcome.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Corporate Services Committee with sufficient information to enable it to make an informed recommendation to County Council as to whether or not there is merit in Grey County joining with lower tier municipalities to explore in more detail the creation of a county-wide library system or county-wide reciprocal library card program.

The questions that are central to a review of this nature include:

- What is the issue we are trying to address by potentially involving the county in the delivery of library services?
- Why should the county become involved?
- Would the county’s involvement address the identified concerns?
- Are there unintended negative consequences to the county’s involvement?
- Are there other options that would better address the issues?
- Would the county’s involvement be consistent with its stated mission, vision and values?

Background

In recent years considerable interest has been expressed by a number of parties in having greater coordination and cooperation between the county and local municipalities, with the aim of improving service delivery, reducing service redundancies and gaps, and reducing or at the very least constraining the ever-increasing costs of delivering public services.

On March 6, 2013, County Council adopted what it calls the *Collaborative Decision-making Framework* as policy in response to this growing public interest. The framework is an effort to structure the terms of reference and process of engaging the County and other municipal organizations wishing to explore a shared approach to a specified service challenge or potential new service arrangement. The framework provides step by step general guidelines for undertaking a collaborative review.

The policy may be viewed in its entirety at the following link:

[Grey County Collaborative Decision-making Framework, Revised Report 2013.](#)

Methodology

This report is limited in scope to Step One of the Collaborative Decision-making Framework. County Council has asked for an assessment of whether or not Grey County should involve itself and commit resources to a more comprehensive service review process leading towards a county library system and/or a shared county-wide library card. If Council decides there is merit, then the County would proceed to Step Two as set out in policy.

Upon receiving a request for a collaborative service review, the County Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is required to prepare a report to the Corporate Services Committee based on a preliminary assessment of the request and the issues at hand, and to make a recommendation as to next steps. In reviewing the request, the collaborative framework policy suggests that the CAO should consider, among other things, the following:

1. The desired service outcome
2. The financial, resource, and service implications to the County
3. The parties that need to be involved with the County in the review
4. Advantages and disadvantages of potential alternatives
5. Any common, strategic and community considerations of where service improvements are needed most urgently and/or where there would be value added through a new service arrangement.

In doing the research for this report, information and opinion were gathered from local municipal CAOs, the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Chairs of a number of the library boards in the county, representatives of the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS), the CAOs from selected adjoining counties, selected CEOs of adjoining county library boards, and independent secondary research.

Structure of Report

This report starts off with a quick review of the changing nature of public libraries in society, the legislation that guides public libraries in Ontario and the provincial policy framework that supports public libraries. An overview of the current state of public libraries in Grey County is then provided, followed by a discussion of county library models in Ontario. Rounding out the report is an assessment of the potentially available options and a recommendation as to any further engagement on the issue.

The Changing Role of the Public Library

Some would say that libraries are going the way of the dinosaurs, given society's embrace of electronic communications and media, and question the merits of any additional investment in libraries. Research shows however, that public libraries, far from heading towards extinction, have a strong and increasingly important role in literacy and learning, innovation, community development and prosperity.

As noted in a report prepared in 2008 for the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture entitled, *THIRD GENERATION PUBLIC LIBRARIES: Visionary Thinking and Service Development in Public Libraries (to 2020) and Potential Application in Ontario*, people continue to participate in and hold libraries in high regard not in spite of, but because of, the great changes being experienced in society. Libraries are developing and adopting new tools and partnerships to strengthen and supplement their key roles in providing lifelong learning and serving as engines of cultural and economic development. The future of the public library is nicely captured in the above-noted report. Quoting from it,

Public libraries of the future will be catalysts and leaders in community-based economic development. They will have a strategic role in knowledge-intensive industries like digital media. They will also be mainstays of community-based cultural planning and development. The amount of information available will grow, and much of it will be of questionable value and accuracy. Public libraries will play an increasingly significant role in the literacies of the twenty-first century that enable people to select, assess and use the information that will best meet their needs. As the number of technology devices increases, libraries will enable increased equality of access and participation and help people create and exchange new content. One of the ways libraries will do this is by collaborating, within the library sector and beyond, to develop stronger networks.

Public libraries will continue to be welcoming places of community, both real and virtual. Renewed physical libraries will be exciting and involving spaces. Public libraries will

widely adopt research-based approaches. This will enhance their role as the preschooler's door to reading and learning and will strengthen early learning and family literacy. Initiatives for youth in school and at risk will be staples of future public library service, and youth will thrive in the redesigned spaces.

The public library of the future will work more systematically with partners, including government, to integrate newcomers and socially marginalized people. Based on results from pilot projects of the past decade, libraries will be important in responding to language and other settlement needs. The growing numbers of seniors will enjoy services better customized to their interests and abilities. Services to Aboriginal peoples, on and off reserves, will be responsive and relevant to their needs and preferences. The longstanding role of the public library as society's informal learning system will change in terms of service delivery, but it will remain constant in its values and commitment to the individual.

Government and private sector roles will also evolve. Governments will have more fully developed partnerships with public libraries. As a result, governments will be able to deliver services in high-priority areas such as youth, early childhood, and immigration more seamlessly and effectively. In partnership with governments, the public library will be an effective advocate for a balanced approach to intellectual property and a robust public domain of ideas.

The private sector will recognize that public libraries have a key role in reaching a huge market of people seeking information and knowledge. Businesses will understand how this applies to testing exportable software and new media in the "home market." The long relationship between libraries and the publishing industry will thus extend into the future. Other private sector roles will include designing and supporting facilities, collaborating in business and economic development initiatives, and supporting libraries through volunteerism and philanthropy.

Public policy discussions about the merits of continued investment in public libraries, such as the one being had in Grey County now, are timely and necessary.

Public Library Legislation

In Ontario, the *Public Libraries Act* is the central piece of legislation governing public libraries. It supports the provision of equal and universal access to information and establishes free public library services in Ontario through governance and regulations.

Public libraries are governed by independent boards, which are corporations established under the *Public Libraries Act*. Municipal councils may establish a **public library board** to serve their own municipality, or establish a **union public library board** by agreement with one or more other municipalities.

A municipality also has the option of entering into a **purchase of service agreement** with a public library board, union board or county library board to provide library services to that municipality, rather than establish its own library board or become part of a union or county library board.

When at least two-thirds of the municipalities in a county so request, a county may establish a **county library board** to serve those participating municipalities.

Library boards must appointment a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) according to the *Public Libraries Act*. The CEO has general supervision over and direction of the operations of the public library.

Libraries also operate within a complex environment of municipal policies and by-laws that have bearing on their operations, financing and governance. While similar in many respects across the province, the relationships between library boards and their respective municipal councils are unique and reflect local needs and circumstances. This makes any form of comparison a challenge.

A library may provide its own administrative functions such as payroll, or may enter into an agreement with its municipality or county. Where such administrative financial agreements exist however, directions regarding the disbursement of library funds remain the prerogative of the library board.

Southern Ontario Library Service

The Province of Ontario provides considerable oversight and support to the public library system and delivery of services and programs through an arm's length agency called the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS). The Mission of the SOLS is to ensure equitable access to library services at a sustainable cost for all Ontarians, by:

1. Increasing the cooperation and coordination among public library boards and other information providers; and
2. Providing services and programs to public library boards that reflect their needs, including consultation, training and development.

SOLS serves the public libraries of almost 200 municipalities in southern Ontario and partners with the Ontario Library Service – North and other provincial bodies across the nation.

Among its many services, SOLS provides an inter-library loan service called INFO and maintains an electronic collections service known as OverDrive, which allows the direct transfer of audiobooks, eBooks, movies, and music to computers and portable devices (eBook readers, iPod, Zune, MP3 players, smartphones, etc.). This e-collection is available through a membership to public libraries that serve a population of fewer than 100,000 people and have an integrated library system (ILS). Grey County libraries take advantage of these services.

In 2013, SOLS, in conjunction with its sister organization, the Ontario Library Service North (OLS-North), undertook a study of the feasibility of implementing a provincial information management system (ILS) consortium for Ontario's public libraries. The study showed that while there is interest in the notion of a provincial ILS there is no commitment among library boards towards its implementation now. The study has recommended that SOLS and OLS-North work with library partners to build a greater commitment towards a provincial system.

Public Library Performance Guidelines

The Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council provides a set of guidelines to assist public libraries in developing and maintaining consistently strong public library service. The *Ontario Public Library Guidelines* program also provides an accreditation process to recognize the achievement of public libraries that meet the program's requirements. The *Guidelines* offer voluntary standards that individual public libraries can choose to follow or exceed, regardless of whether or not they decide to pursue accreditation.

The introduction to the Guidelines states, "All Ontarians, regardless of where in Ontario they live and work, have a right to public library service that meets basic, widely accepted norms of library practice and service. The *Guidelines* offer a method for small, medium and county public libraries to meet basic service levels and to continue to grow to meet the ever-changing needs of their communities."

Across Ontario, there are twenty-six (26) accredited libraries and 7 others actively pursuing accreditation. There are no accredited libraries in Grey County.

Public Libraries in Grey County

In Grey County today the county level of government has no involvement in the provision of library services. Rather, seven (7) local public library boards operate twelve (12) library branches across the county.

Figure 1 on the following page, is a map that shows the location of public library branches in Grey County with a star symbol.

Table 1 lists the public library boards, the municipalities served and existing service agreements between boards and municipalities.

Figure 1 Library Locations in Grey County



Table 1: Library Boards and Branches in Grey County, 2013

Library Board	Municipalities Served	Branch Locations	Reciprocal Service Agreements	Contracted Service
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Library Board	Municipalities Served	Branch Locations	Reciprocal Service Agreements	Contracted Service
The Blue Mountains Public Library	The Blue Mountains	Thornbury	Meaford, Grey Highlands	nil
Grey Highlands Public Library	Grey Highlands	Flesherton, Kimberley, Markdale	Meaford, Blue Mountains	To West Grey and Chatsworth; From Collingwood:
Hanover Public Library	Hanover	Hanover	nil	nil
Meaford Public Library	Meaford	Meaford	Blue Mountains, Grey Highlands,	From Owen Sound & North Grey for former Sydenham Tsp.
Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library	Owen Sound, Georgian Bluffs, Chatsworth	Owen Sound	nil	To Meaford for former Sydenham Tsp. only
Southgate Public Library	Southgate	Dundalk	nil	Service to Melancthon Township; Service from Wellington County
West Grey Public Library	West Grey	Durham, Neustadt, Elmwood, Ayton	nil	From Grey Highlands

Appendices 1a and 1b to this report provide selected comparative data for all library boards in Grey County, drawn from a provincial data base maintained by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, which can be found at the following link: [Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport website](#). The appendix contains 2010 data, as more recent complete data is not available on the Ministry website.

Table 2 below provides a summary of some of the more notable comparative data outlined in Appendix 1. It organizes the data according to the highest and lowest reported value, as well as the average and median values (midpoint) for each.

Table 2: Comparing Public Libraries in Grey County: Selected Indicators

Measure (2010 Data)	High	Low	Average	Median
Population Served by Library Board	40,000+	7,500	12,900	8,405
Card Holders (households)	15,000	1,600	5,000	4,228
Weekly Hours of Operation/Branch	71	18	43	39
Expenditures per Capita	\$69.28	\$14.02	\$36.50	\$33.97
Annual Library Transactions	300,000+	26,000	113,000	88,574
In-Person Visits	241,600	21,000	72,050	46,650
Electronic Visits	83,000	0	n.a.	9,650
Total Staff (FTE)	15.0	1.17	6.0	5.14
Annual Operating Expenditures (rounded)	\$1.3 M	\$100K	\$700K	\$494K

Source: Ontario Public Libraries Service

There is a significant variation between the public library boards in Grey County in terms of population served, size of collections, range of services offered, availability of services and cost to operate. The Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library (OS&NGUPL) is the largest library board in the county, serving a population in excess of 40,000 people across four municipalities.

In 2010 the OS&NGUPL had annual library transactions of all types exceeding 300,000, annual in-person visits in excess of 240,000, a staff complement of 15 and annual operating expenditures of about \$1.3 million. The other boards in the county are considerably smaller by most measures.

More recent financial information is available through the municipal Financial Information Returns (FIRs), which are filed by municipalities with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing each year. This information is examined later in the Financial Implications section of this report.

Library Interaction

Even though each public library board is an independent entity working within a defined municipal territory, there is considerable interaction between boards at the governance

and operations levels. The library boards meet or have the opportunity to meet twice a year as part of the Southern Ontario Library Service Trustee Councils to share information and maintain working relationships.

Library operations work closely together on an almost daily basis for such things as inter-library loan, training opportunities, some programming, special projects, etc. Senior library staff meets regularly with representatives of the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS), the provincial body that provides the group with significant systems supports, training and insights into emerging issues and changes in funding, legislation and regulations.

Library Management Systems

Information management is the life blood of a library. The Integrated Library System or ILS is the business heart of the library, being central to almost every function, from acquisitions to cataloguing, patron management to lending and more.

These systems have largely been the domain of private vendors who charge yearly fees to maintain their system, not unlike many municipal information systems. In recent years however, new *open source* systems are being introduced that enable libraries to have greater control over the management of their data. “Open source” means that the source code for the software is freely available for use, modification and re-distribution back to the community by participating boards.

The table below shows the different ILS’s in use across the county library boards.

Table 3 Integrated Library Systems (ILS) in Grey County

Library Board	Type of ILS	Open Source (OS) or Proprietary (P)	Information Consortia
Blue Mountains	KOHA	OS	n.a.
Meaford	Mandarin Oasis	P	n.a.
Grey Highlands	KOHA	OS	Saugeen Consortium
West Grey	KOHA	OS	Saugeen Consortium
Hanover	KOHA	OS	Saugeen Consortium
Southgate	LibraryWorld	P	n.a.
Owen Sound & North Grey Union	Sirsi/Dynix	P	Ontario Library Consortium

Many libraries in Ontario and Grey County have joined information sharing networks, called consortia. These consortia vary in size and scope and provide integrated information services across library boards, encourage cooperative use of technology

and resources, and maximize cost benefits through joint purchasing of equipment, software and materials. Through these consortia library boards coordinate the purchase of and support for their ILS.

The Ontario Library Consortium (OLC)

The OS&NGUPL is a member of the Ontario Library Consortium (OLC), which consists of 27 library boards (11 county and region and 16 medium-sized local public libraries) throughout southern Ontario. It includes over 180 branch libraries and 27 headquarters, serving approximately 8% of the Ontario population. Member libraries have or are in the process of migrating to what is called the Enterprise Discovery Portal, which combines the library website and library catalogue into one seamless, accurate, searchable platform. This new web presence will be more user friendly for staff and patrons alike.

Of note, the OLC's agreement with the Sirsi/Dynix management system comes due at the end of 2015 and the consortium is exploring potential alternatives. Members, like the OS&NGUPL, have the choice to remain a part of the bulk purchasing arrangement or to pursue an independent path.

The Saugeen Library Consortium (SLC)

Grey Highlands, West Grey and Hanover Public Libraries are members of the Saugeen Library Consortium (SLC), along with Grand Valley and Shelburne Public Libraries in Dufferin County. The members work together closely on many issues, including technology supports and the purchase of a common information management system (the KOHA open source ILS).

Interlibrary Loan Service

Libraries cannot always meet all the informational, cultural and recreational needs of their citizens within their own resources. Using the **INFO** (Information Network for Ontario) interlibrary loan system offered through the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS), libraries provide their patrons with access to information resources in public libraries across the province and beyond. Courier delivery is also part of this service. All libraries in Grey County are part of the interlibrary loan system.

Most libraries also are members of the **OverDrive** electronic collection service offered through SOLS, which provides direct transfer of audiobooks, eBooks, movies, and music to computers and portable devices (eBook readers, iPod, Zune, MP3 players, smartphones, etc.).

Service Agreements

A number of local public library boards enhance access to service for their patrons or generate additional revenue through service agreements negotiated with adjoining municipalities or library boards, as noted in Table 1 of this report. In Meaford, Blue Mountains and Grey Highlands, the library boards have reciprocal agreements that enable patrons to have mutual library privileges across all three boards if they wish. In the absence of a shared information management system (ILS), a common library card cannot be issued. Patrons in good standing who so wish are issued a card from each library board.

Meaford purchases access to library services from the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library Board for its residents living in the former Sydenham Township. Meaford is not, however, a member of the Union Library Board. Residents of the former Sydenham Township so wishing are issued two library cards, one from Meaford Public Library and one from OS&NGUPL. A common user card is not possible because the libraries use different information management systems (ILS).

Grey Highlands has an agreement to access services offered by the Collingwood Public Library for its residents. West Grey and Chatsworth each have an agreement to obtain service from Grey Highlands Public Library.

Southgate Public Library provides access to its library to residents of adjoining Melancthon Township in Dufferin County by way of an agreement with that township. About 130 Melancthon residents are members of the Southgate library. Southgate also purchases access for its residents to the services offered through the Wellington County Public Library branch in Mount Forest.

Challenges Facing Libraries

There is much written about the challenges facing libraries today, notably:

- the changing role of libraries in the community
- the demands and pace of ever-changing technology
- the need for ultra-high speed/high capacity broadband connectivity to the Internet
- patrons' rising service expectations
- need for staff training
- human resource management
- service and facility accessibility requirements
- capital asset management and renewal
- ever-constrained operating budgets

These challenges were echoed in discussions with local librarians/CEOs and library board chairs.

Alternative Library Models

In trying to answer the question posed by County Council's direction, a number of service models or arrangements were reviewed. This includes:

1. The County Library
2. The County Co-operative
3. County-wide Integrated Library System (ILS)
4. County financial or other supports to local library boards
5. Purchase of Service from neighbouring counties
6. Joint County Library Board
7. Expanded Union Library Board

1. Establishing a County Library System

In southwestern Ontario most counties fund a county library system of some description; the exceptions being: Grey, Perth, and Dufferin.

A county library system may be established provided that at least two-thirds of the local municipalities in a county request such, by formal council resolution. For Grey County that would mean a minimum of six (6) municipal councils would need to make such a request in order to create a Grey County library system. The remaining municipalities not wishing to participate would not be required to join or pay for the system.

When a county library board is established the library boards for the affected lower tier municipalities are dissolved and the assets and liabilities of those boards are vested in and assumed by the county library board unless the by-law establishing the county library provides otherwise.

A county library board must be established and consist of at least five members appointed by county council. Members of county council cannot make up more than a bare majority of the board. This is different than the requirements for local public library boards where municipal councillors cannot constitute a board majority.

A county library board must operate at least one branch library in each local municipality that operated a public library before that municipality became part of the county library system, unless the county council and the council of the municipality concerned agree otherwise prior to the establishment of the county system.

The operating costs of a county library board are approved by county council and must be included as part of the county levy for those local municipalities participating in the county library system. At any time after a county library is established, the council of a non-participating lower-tier municipality and the county council may make an agreement to bring the non-participating lower-tier municipality into the county library system. Interestingly, the *Public Libraries Act* is silent as to whether a participating local municipality can withdraw from a county library system.

Local municipalities may, at the request of the county library board, rent accommodation to the board and may issue municipal debentures for the cost of constructing a building for the board's purposes, but the ownership of the building is to remain with the municipality unless the board and the council of the municipality agree otherwise.

Organizations must comply with the *Public Libraries Act* and its Regulation to be eligible for provincial public library operating funding. This funding is not guaranteed and must be applied for each year. Such funding only makes up a small portion of the overall library budget. Other provincial funding may be available under specific programs in any given year.

Every board must allow the public to reserve and borrow certain circulating materials, and use reference and information services as the board considers practicable, at no charge. Fees can be charged for certain specialty or "non-core" services, for use of the parts of a building not used for public library purposes and the use of library services by persons who do not reside in the area of the board's jurisdiction.

A library board must appoint a chief executive officer to provide general supervision over and direction of the operations of the public library and its staff. A number of municipalities provide administrative and staffing supports to library boards (e.g. human resources, payroll, finance, information technology). Direction regarding the disbursement of library funds, however, remains the prerogative of the library board.

There are benefits to this kind of model in that it creates a common service delivery agent with a county-wide perspective. There are programming and process advantages that may be realized through a larger, broader reaching organization. Experience suggests however, that there is an inherent almost unavoidable "leveling up" of expectations, standards, services, programming and ultimately costs that occurs when a larger organizational service structure is put in place. Some areas where increased costs would be expected to occur would be in staffing ratios, wages and benefit costs, asset management, technology, programming, hours of operation, etc.

This also creates an immediate and natural tension between the desire for centralized service "oneness" or efficiency vs. localized programming differentiation. That is a balance that many larger organizations continue to find elusive.

Appendix 2 summarizes selected data for a number of counties. Also provided for comparison purposes is aggregated data for the library boards in Grey County, which will be discussed later in this report.

2. County Library Cooperative

The County of Simcoe maintains what is called a county library co-operative system. It is unique in Ontario; the last of its kind to be recognized in legislation by the Province. Provincial legislation no longer enables the creation of county library co-operatives of this nature. Interestingly, many of today's county library systems began as co-operatives.

The Library Co-operative is not governed by a board. It is a department within the county's organizational structure. The Library is one of four County departments that fall under the Statutory and Cultural Services Division, headed by the County Clerk. The Library reports monthly to a standing committee of county council.

Unlike a more traditional county library system, the Simcoe County Co-operative does not deal directly with the public. Its clients are the twenty-seven libraries and branches operated by fourteen local library boards within Simcoe County. The Co-operative supplements, supports and enhances the library services provided by its local members.

The Co-operative is funded by the County of Simcoe and receives a modest annual operating grant from the Provincial Government.

Members of the Co-operative provide input into its operations through the Chief Librarians' Committee. This committee is composed of the Chief Executive Officers of member libraries and the Chief Librarian of the County. The committee is a planning and advisory body with responsibility for developing, monitoring and evaluating the services provided by the Co-operative.

Membership in the Co-operative is restricted to municipal library boards in the County of Simcoe (not including the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia). Participation in any program or service of the Co-operative is strictly voluntary.

All municipalities in the County contribute to the financial support of the County Library Co-operative through the general county tax levy; therefore, all municipal public libraries in Simcoe County are eligible to use the services of the Co-operative. The Canadian Forces Base Borden Library Board is also a member of the Co-operative. Its participation is paid for in part through payments in lieu of taxation received by the County from the Federal Government.

The Simcoe Co-operative takes the lead in supporting the automation of member libraries. The databases of these libraries reside on the County Library servers located in the Administration Centre. The individual co-operative members purchase their own computer workstations and pay for the initial startup costs. Subsequently, each pays an annual licensing fee for the software. This fee is based on the total number of staff and public workstations that access the library program.

In 2010 the Co-operative amalgamated the eleven separate library databases into one union catalogue. County Library staff administers the automated management system, the ILS, for its members. The Co-operative uses the Sirsi/Dynix ILS, which notably is also used by the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library.

The County Library Co-operative provides a variety of services to member libraries, including:

- Delivery Van
- Rotations of Special Collections
- Digital Collections
- Electronic Online Databases
- Reference and Local History Collection
- Library Journals
- Large Print and Video Pools
- Consortium Purchasing
- Wireless Public Internet Access
- Library Automation and Systems Administration
- Training for all library staff
- Bulk purchasing

The benefit of this model is that it provides for integration across the local library boards in areas of common local interest and need without taking away from local programming autonomy. The role of the cooperative is precisely defined and funding is carefully scoped to fulfill the co-operative's strict mandate. Participation in the co-operative is voluntary.

In speaking with a representative of SOLS it was suggested that getting special legislation to create a county co-operative or to establish any unique form of governance or delivery would in all likelihood be difficult. The Public Libraries Act was amended some years ago to prohibit the creation of new county co-operatives and to grandfather the Simcoe County system. The Province has not been receptive in the past to new organizational arrangements not recognized by legislation. In one instance cited, a large urban municipality has attempted on three separate occasions, without success, to replace its local library board with a committee reporting to municipal council.

3. County-wide Integrated Library System

Perth County does not have a county library system nor does the county government provide any direct financial support to the local library boards in the county. The local public library boards saw a need for greater collaboration and seamless service to clients in the county and so collaborated to create a common automated library information management system called the Perth County Information Network or PCIN.

The PCIN is an incorporated not-for-profit organization with a board of directors composed of two representatives elected from each of the founding members' Board of Trustees. It enables the residents of Perth County to have virtual access over the Internet to the resources of all participating libraries. The shared ILS allows patrons from any library in the system to borrow materials from any of the five libraries. One card serves all patrons no matter the local municipality in which they live. Items can be returned to any library, and patrons can pick up an item on hold anywhere in the system.

Each member library retains its decision-making autonomy, while benefiting from the advantages of a shared information management partnership. Information about community services and recreational resources is also available to all residents of Perth County, in addition to access to the collections of all participating libraries. Central acquisition and processing functions through PCIN reduce duplication of effort in each of the members' libraries; as well as an estimated saving of almost 40% annually in purchasing costs according to PCIN literature.

Member libraries now have a mechanism to collaborate in the areas of program planning, policy development, training, and collection development. This enables member libraries to use their budgets to broaden the scope of their collections rather than duplicate materials now available through the network.

It must be pointed out that representatives of the PCIN were not contacted for the purposes of this review to solicit their views of how well the system is working.

4. County Support to Local Library Boards

Many municipalities and counties provide administrative supports to their local or county library boards to achieve operating efficiencies.

Consideration could be given by County Council to providing some type of support to local libraries, either on a one-time basis or ongoing, without becoming involved in the actual delivery of library services. This could include ongoing operating subsidy, project funding or funding for capital asset management. Other forms of assistance could

include things like administrative supports, human resources, information services, asset management, etc.

The potential merits of this kind of support from Grey County would require considerable detailed analysis and discussion with municipalities and library boards.

5. Purchasing Library Service from Adjoining Counties

Grey County could purchase county wide library services from an adjoining county library system. This could be similar to the arrangement Bruce County has with Grey County for Provincial Offences Act administration and court services, for example.

No discussions have been held with representatives from adjoining counties to gauge the interest, ability, capacity or feasibility of such a proposal. In doing so it would be essential to clearly establish desired service outcomes expected of such an arrangement.

6. Joint County Library Board

Grey County could consider partnering with an adjoining county in the delivery of library service. This is different from option 5 above in that Grey County would be a full partner through a joint board in the governance and decision-making of the service rather than simply purchasing access to service. There is a rich history of counties partnering to deliver services across county boundaries. There may be a host of advantages and disadvantages to such an arrangement that would have to be explored and well understood before making any such decision. And of course a willing partner would be required. It is perhaps notable that there are no joint county public library boards in Ontario. It is not known whether the Province would support the creation of this unique arrangement.

7. Expanded Union Library Board

The union board model is the final alternative identified in this review. This would involve disbanding all existing local library boards in favour of a union board. The Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library Board exists now to serve Owen Sound, Georgian Bluffs and Chatsworth (with a service agreement for the former Sydenham Township residents in Meaford). Expanding the current board structure to include all municipalities within the County may be worthy of consideration for local municipalities. The model would not involve the county, as the governance, financial and operating relationships would be between the union board and the local municipal councils it would be serving.

It is noted that the union model was originally created as a shared governance model to address situations where municipalities did not have and were not served by a public library board of their own. How applicable this model would be to the Grey County context has not been examined in this review.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

Considerations

A Note about the Data

There appear to be some differences between the data sets reported through the SOLS system and the municipal financial information returns system used by municipalities to report annually to the Province. This would appear to be a result of differences in accounting for how data is aggregated for reporting purposes. The differences between data sets are not considered material for the purposes of this high level and cursory review.

Local Municipal Operating Expenditures

Over 80% of public library funding comes from municipal taxation. Five per cent (5%) comes from Provincial operating grants and the remainder from user fees, donations and project specific grants. Table 4 provides a summary of the financial contribution each municipality in Grey County made towards public library operating expenditures in 2011 and 2012. This data does not include amortization of capital assets.

Table 4: Library Operating Expenditures by Municipality in Grey County

Municipality	2011		2012	
	\$	\$ per Capita	\$	\$ per Capita
Blue Mountains	571,722	88.6	\$ 590,729	91.5
Chatsworth	125,633	19.5	\$ 128,665	20.0
Georgian Bluffs	272,204	25.9	\$ 273,728	26.1
Grey Highlands	309,896	32.6	\$ 376,772	39.6
Hanover	480,925	64.2	\$ 542,477	72.4
Meaford	500,162	45.1	\$ 564,187	50.8
Southgate	98,792	13.7	\$ 116,771	16.2
West Grey	231,643	18.9	\$ 249,230	20.3
Owen Sound	723,004	32.9	\$ 744,238	33.8
TOTAL	3,313,981		\$ 3,586,797	
Average		37.9		41.2

Source: Municipal Financial Information Returns

As Table 4 shows, there is a sizeable range in library operating costs and cost per capita across the municipalities in Grey County. Annual operating expenditures in 2012 ranged from a high of \$745,000 to a low of \$117,000, with the cost per capita ranging from a high of \$91.50 to a low of \$16.20.

Comparative County Library Expenditures

Table 5 below summarizes annual library operating expenditures for selected counties in the southwest region that maintain a county library system. Grey County ranks fourth in population among this group of counties. Its local municipalities' combined spending on libraries ranked fourth. On an overall per capita spending basis, however, the combined municipalities of Grey County ranked sixth.

The per capita aggregated spending in 2012 across all counties on the list was \$39.20. By comparison, the aggregated per capita operating spending for all municipalities in Grey County combined was \$38.57.

The average per capita spending by county in 2012 was \$42.64 and the median or midpoint value for the group was \$44.54.

Table 5: 2012 County Library Operating Expenditures by Selected County

County	Population	Operating Expenditure	Cost Per Capita
Bruce	61,423	\$ 2,823,993	\$ 45.98
Elgin	49,556	\$ 2,426,252	\$ 48.96
Essex	176,642	\$ 4,425,930	\$ 25.06
Huron	57,579	\$ 2,498,169	\$ 43.39
Lambton	126,199	\$ 5,259,821	\$ 41.70
Middlesex	70,796	\$ 2,497,654	\$ 35.28
Oxford	44,627	\$ 2,448,372	\$ 54.86
Wellington	94,628	\$ 4,323,240	\$ 45.69
Average	85,181	\$ 3,337,929	\$ 42.62
Median	65,000	\$ 2,661,081	\$ 44.54
Total	681,450	\$ 26,703,431	\$ 39.20
Grey	93,000	\$ 3,586,797	\$ 38.57

Source: Municipal Financial Information Returns

Funding a County Library System

As noted above, the libraries in Grey County today are funded largely from the local municipal property tax base (with some provincial grants, donations and user fees making up the rest). Municipal councils determine their level of financial support to local public library boards based on local needs and circumstances and include those costs in the municipal property tax levy.

In a county system, the municipal financial contribution to the cost of running county services is determined by the county tax levy. Like the municipal levy, the county tax levy is based on property assessment values, not population and not number of electors. Generally therefore, properties with relatively higher property assessments contribute proportionately more to the levy. This has significant implications that are summarized in Table 6 below.

Column A in Table 6 lists the contribution of each municipality in Grey County towards their public libraries in 2012. Column B expresses that spending as a percentage of the aggregated library spending of all municipalities in the county.

Column C provides the proportionate share of the 2013 Grey County tax levy by municipality. The corresponding taxpayer contribution in dollars by municipality is provided in Column D.

Column E provides the percentage change between municipal figures in Columns A and D – the impact of moving to a county-wide system funded by the county tax levy.

Table 6 Shift in Municipal Funding of County Library

Municipality	Column A 2012 Operating Expenditure	Column B % of Total	Column C % of 2013 County Tax Levy	Column D Operating Expenditure if Based on 2013 County Levy	Column E % Change in Expenditure
Blue Mountains	\$590,729	16.5	25.7	\$921,807	+56%
Chatsworth	\$128,665	3.6	5.1	\$182,927	+42%
Georgian Bluffs	\$273,728	7.6	10.9	\$390,961	+43%
Grey Highlands	\$376,772	10.5	11.4	\$376,614	No change
Hanover	\$542,477	15.1	5.3	\$190,100	-65%
Meaford	\$564,187	15.7	11.6	\$416,069	-26%
Southgate	\$116,771	3.3	5.0	\$179,340	+54%
West Grey	\$249,230	7.0	9.4	\$337,159	+35%
Owen Sound	\$744,238	20.8	15.6	\$559,540	-25%
Total	\$3,586,797	100.0	100.0	\$3,586,797	No change

Source: Municipal Financial Information Returns

This admittedly simplistic methodology is considered to be a good proxy for the minimum contributions that taxpayers in each municipality could expect to pay towards a county funded and operated library system, at least at the outset and assuming the same overall expenditure level as 2012. It demonstrates the significant shift in current annual municipal contributions to library services that would be expected to occur if a county funded system was created.

Under such a scenario, taxpayers in five local municipalities would see their contribution to library services increase significantly, while three would have sizable reductions. One municipality would remain at essentially the same spending level.

Experience would suggest that this sort of service delivery amalgamation invariably would lead to higher operating costs, not lower, as service levels, staff compensation and other operating expenses tend to “level up” to the highest existing standard over time, not down to the lowest. Reactive efforts to mitigate escalating costs then

inevitably lead to reductions in service levels, service availability and/or service delivery points.

This analysis does not include consideration of capital costs for major capital like new or refurbished buildings. Capital considerations add considerably to the full cost of maintaining a library system of any description. In a county model where there would be pressure to standardize facilities and services, the capital costs would be expected to escalate considerably over time.

This analysis does not include one-time costs that would be incurred to transition the incumbent library systems into a new one-county system. For example, the cost of creating a county-wide integrated library management system (necessary for a county card system) would be expected to be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The question to be answered then is this: Would the incremental improvements in service and seamless service availability that a county system may create, justify the sizeable increase in costs and the sizeable shift in proportionate costs that some municipal taxpayers would experience within a county operated system?

It is possible of course to create a county library system that only serves some of the municipalities within the county. The legislation only requires a minimum of two thirds of the lower tier municipalities to be engaged in a county library system. In Grey County that means that up to three municipalities could choose not to be part of a county library system. The cost and service implications of such a scenario has not been tested in this review. The impact would be expected to be significant and would have to be carefully examined to determine if there was merit in proceeding with such a pared-down system.

Assessing the Options

The advantages and disadvantages of each option identified in this review are outlined in Table 7 below. Admittedly, this is a cursory assessment of the options. The precise nature of the impacts and implications of each would have to be more carefully and thoroughly explored through a much more rigorous service review, if County Council wishes to proceed further.

Table 7 Expected Advantages and Disadvantages of Identified Service Options

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
County Library	<p>Centralized governance</p> <p>Common decision-making for entire system</p> <p>One integrated library system (ILS)</p> <p>County library card</p> <p>Economies of scale for training, labour management, asset management, core service supports</p> <p>More consistency in planning, policy and programming</p> <p>Strengthening of staff expertise, scope and capacity, and core services such as IT</p>	<p>Loss of local governance</p> <p>Higher operating costs expected</p> <p>Significant Transition costs</p> <p>Significant shift in municipalities' relative cost shares – perceived “winners” and “losers”</p> <p>Loss of local autonomy in programming decisions</p> <p>Cuts to service and service locations to mitigate higher system costs</p> <p>Service is not within current scope of Grey County suite of services</p>
County Cooperative	<p>Centralized core services for economies of scale</p> <p>Staff expertise strengthened</p> <p>Core services such as IT management strengthened</p> <p>Local governance maintained</p> <p>Local autonomy of delivery and programming maintained</p> <p>Voluntary participation</p>	<p>Requires special provincial legislation, which would be difficult to achieve</p> <p>Managing voluntary participation of members and brokering differences would pose ongoing challenges</p> <p>Lack of consistently available and reliable ultra-high speed and high capacity Internet connectivity across the county</p>
County-wide Integrated Management System	<p>Facilitates a County library card</p> <p>Equitable access to and availability of services/programs</p> <p>Integrated shared information system</p> <p>Seamless service between libraries</p> <p>Local autonomy and service/programming decisions preserved</p> <p>No County involvement</p>	<p>Cost and time to agree on selection and implementation of a common ILS</p> <p>Governance of an ILS consortia could be a challenge</p> <p>Implementation costs would be expected to be appreciable</p> <p>Increased ongoing operating costs would be expected particularly inter-library loan costs of transporting documents between branches.</p> <p>Lack of consistently available, reliable ultra-high speed, high capacity Internet connectivity across the county may prove a barrier to implementation</p>

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
County Support to Local Libraries	<p>Provides professional standardized services that otherwise some local libraries may not be able to afford (e.g. human resource management, staff training, IT systems);</p> <p>Strengthens library systems without county involvement or control of programming decisions</p> <p>Maintains local autonomy in programming and political oversight</p> <p>Support could be tailored to specific needs of stakeholders and could be on a fee for service basis</p>	<p>Adds a net expenditure line to county budget unless provided on a full cost recovery fee for service basis</p>
Purchase of County Library Service	<p>Creating a Grey County library bureaucracy not required</p> <p>Equitable access to and availability of services/programs across a broader geography.</p>	<p>Service agreement negotiations</p> <p>Start-up and transition costs</p> <p>Programming and resource allocation decision-making is now at arm's length</p> <p>Monitoring service agreement required</p> <p>Conflict resolution mechanism required</p> <p>Decisions may be less responsive to local needs and expectations</p> <p>Subject to uncontrollable cost escalations</p>
Joint County Library Board	<p>Centralized governance</p> <p>Common decision-making for entire system</p> <p>One integrated library system (ILS) across the region</p> <p>Regional library card</p> <p>Economies of scale for training, labour management, asset management, core service supports</p> <p>More consistency in planning, policy and programming</p> <p>Strengthening of staff expertise, scope and capacity, and core services such as IT</p>	<p>Loss of local governance</p> <p>Higher operating costs expected</p> <p>Significant Transition costs</p> <p>Significant shift in municipalities' relative cost shares – perceived "winners" and "losers"</p> <p>Loss of local autonomy in programming decisions</p> <p>Managing larger geographically dispersed and diverse area would be a significant challenge</p> <p>Cuts to service and service locations to mitigate higher system costs</p>
Status Quo	<p>Direct energy and resources to other issues</p>	<p>Potential identified service improvements not addressed</p>

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
	No additional county costs Avoids protracted and contentious review process Provides time for parties to assess the implications of a potential provincial ILS system	Inequities across library boards in Grey County would continue
Expanded Union Board	Proven model of governance and operations Shared governance model Common decision-making for entire system One integrated library system (ILS) System wide card possible Would not involve county level and would not report to County Council	Requires negotiations among multiple parties Requires local boards to be disbanded Transition costs

Observations

The request of County Council by the Council of West Grey is motivated by a desire to create a user-friendly, uniformly available and equitably accessible library service county-wide; a system in which any resident of the county has convenient, free and unfettered access to and use of the full range of services and programs on offer in a modern, digitally connected and integrated library system.

The CAO's task has been to determine if there is a compelling argument for the County to commit further time and resources to a more rigorous process of determining how it can partner with local municipalities to achieve the service outcomes articulated by the West Grey resolution.

Public library services in Grey County are delivered by local library boards that are largely funded by municipal councils through the municipal tax base. There is no county involvement. Levels of service, range of services offered, availability of and access to services vary considerably across the seven local library boards.

The overall level of spending on public library services across the public boards in Grey County is mid-pack among comparator counties in the southwest region that operate

county library systems. More significantly however, per capita spending is lower than the average or median values for the comparator group of counties.

Local public library boards and their staff do an admirable job in providing services and programs to their respective client bases given the limited resources available to them. Communities, quite rightly, are proud and protective of their investment in their libraries.

A variety of potential service options were reviewed in a cursory fashion by the County CAO to determine if there is merit in County Council pursuing a further course of action. Of the service options considered, only one appears to offer the potential of significant benefits to warrant further examination. That is, creating a consortium among local public library boards with the express purpose of developing, implementing and maintaining an integrated library information management system across all libraries, like the Perth County Information Network. Such an integrated system is a necessary first step in creating a reciprocal user card across participating library boards.

There are four management systems being used now by the seven library boards. The Blue Mountains, Grey Highlands, West Grey and Hanover all use an open source system called KOHA. Owen Sound & North Grey Union uses a proprietary system called Sirsi/Dynix. Southgate and Meaford use proprietary systems called Library World and Mandarin Oasis, respectively.

Computerized integrated management systems (ILS) are sizable ongoing investments. Like any major business information system, once in place it is difficult to reverse or change course. It is therefore notable that the Owen Sound & North Grey Union library's service agreement for its Sirsi/Dynix system comes to an end in 2015 and the board is actively exploring its options. If ever there was a time to seriously consider the possibility of creating a local ILS consortium, now would be it. This course of action would be consistent with the recommendations of the SOLS/OLS-North review of a provincial ILS noted earlier in this report.

Pursuing a county wide ILS option, while offering perhaps some significant opportunities, is not without its challenges. Experience in other jurisdictions shows that there will be predictable and costly outcomes (financial and operational) that would have to be well understood in the local context and balanced against the benefits of such an integrated system.

For example, creating the expectation of material being available at any library branch in the county (through a common catalogue) creates an increased workload on staff at every library, in packaging and shipping requested items, receiving, processing and notifying the customers. It also means that local resources spend much more time away from their "home" library and not available to anyone while in transit.

North Perth library (3 branches) recently joined the Perth system (PCIN noted earlier) and experienced an immediate and significant increase in inter-library loaned book traffic in and out of their branches. This takes staff away from the front desk customer service, and shifts effort into providing items that will be read only once by one customer, which of course is only a small part of the services provided by libraries these days.

Specifically with Inter-Library Loans - having a second tier (county) between local libraries and the Provincial Inter-Library Loans system now in place may actually slow down provision of items for library customers. To avoid added delays in this system, additional resources would likely need to be considered, which of course would be an added cost.

Inter-library loans are expensive, often costing more in staff time and transportation costs than purchasing the book. The Hanover library, for example, spends about 17 hours a week in staff time to get an average of 39 items (and send out as many to other libraries). If the delivery service and postage costs were not paid for provincially this service would not be sustainable. A recent study at Oakville Public Library concluded that any item costing less than \$25 should be purchased by the local library, not borrowed, and that it was more costly to use their 3-library consortium than go straight to the provincial inter-library loans system.¹ Adding a county delivery service would be a duplication of a service that already exists, but it would likely be a necessary outcome of creating a common county-wide library catalogue, and creating the expectation that libraries can provide all the materials locally.

A significant investment in a common technology platform across all libraries, a commitment to its collaborative implementation and some means of sharing in its governance and ongoing upkeep is required to create a uniformly available and equitably accessible library service county-wide. There does not appear to be a strongly articulated demand for or a shared commitment by local municipal councils and their public library boards to achieving this outcome. This would seem to mirror the experience provincially in the SOLS/OLS-North report on creating a province-wide information system for all libraries as noted earlier - there is a general interest in the idea but no consensus among library boards to proceed towards implementation.

While there is a certain esprit d'accord among the local public library communities, which provides for a level of sharing and cooperation between boards, the local fragmentation of public library services across the county - with differing levels of

¹ See link: [Super Conference 2013](#)

municipal investment, differing local spending priorities, differing service mandates and expectations, and different technology platforms – appears to be a formidable barrier to achieving the desired outcomes articulated by West Grey Council's resolution. This is not said as a criticism, but simply as a statement of the reality we face.

If a county-wide system of some description is indeed the desired outcome, then the process of considering potential models must be embraced and led by local municipal councils and their public library boards. If there is a role for Grey County to play in such an exercise, it possibly may be one of facilitating the process.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

Considerations

Although not recommended, if County Council wishes to pursue a more comprehensive review of library services and potential options for creating a county system or a county-wide library card system, then such a project would need to be included in the County's three year corporate operating plan and resources allocated accordingly.

A comprehensive library review would be expected to cost in the order of \$75,000-\$100,000 to engage the necessary expertise and undertake a suitably inclusive process. Such a study is not in the operating plan and no money has been included in the 2014 budget for this purpose.

In assessing what library service model may be "right" for Grey County, it would be necessary to undertake a detailed comparative cost/benefit analysis of the potential options. It would be essential that the current library arrangements be well documented and understood to provide a strong basis for analysis of options. Such a review would need to include consideration of at least the following factors:

Factors	Description
Desired Programming	The range of services and programs offered and levels of service to be provided, at what locations, within what hours of operation, etc.
Finances	Direct costs such as salary, wage rates, benefits, union/non-union workplaces; staffing ratios; hours of work, etc.
	Indirect costs such as administrative supports for things like Information technology, legal supports, human resources, finance
	Capital needs – Number of branches to be operated, buildings and properties, long-term capital planning needs; life cycle replacement costing
Organizational Capacity	The means by which the county organization could absorb additional service into its organizational framework – additional demands on IT, HR, Finance, legal, clerks, physical space requirements, etc.
Organizational Development	The costs of creating new organizational structures to support optional delivery models – the challenges in creating a new library organization that is geographically dispersed with employees coming from diverse corporate cultures and infusing this new culture into an existing organizational culture within the county structure.
Technology	Technology requirements/demands for an integrated county-wide rural/urban system in this age of rapid tech. change within library system
Labour/Management	Collective bargaining implications
User Satisfaction	Assessing the impact of different models on user needs and levels of satisfaction.
Participating Municipalities	The number of municipalities participating in a county system will obviously impact the cost per participant. Assessing different participation rates would be necessary to gain a sense of the range of possible

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

The Council of West Grey has asked the County to consider involving itself in a process of examining ways to improve access to and the equitable and seamless delivery of public library services across the county. Intuitively there would seem to be merit in this way of thinking. After all, the county level of government exists to deliver or coordinate a range of services where economies of scale and service objectives can be realized more effectively at a regional level. While Grey County does not provide library services, there are many examples of counties in Ontario that do. The question is, should it?

As a matter of first principles, consideration of public policy questions of this nature is guided by the County's strategic plan. The plan is a blue print of sorts for how County Council would like to see the county organization evolve over the next several years. The Plan captures the essence of Grey County and its focus on building a bright future. It is intended to serve as a touchstone for public policy development and resource allocation decisions by County Council by setting out broad policy goals and program objectives.

While no strategic objective of the Plan speaks directly to the issue of uploading library services to the county level, two objectives at least have some general bearing, namely:

- Objective 4.1 Continue to work collaboratively with local municipalities to define service and program responsibilities between the upper and lower-tier municipalities.

- Objective 5.3 Explore innovative ways to more effectively and efficiently deliver services and programs, including consideration of partnerships

It is through the above referenced objectives that County Council developed and approved the Collaborative Decision-making Framework that has been used in this review. That Framework also sets up a check and balance process to ensure that any shift in service responsibilities between the two levels of government is carefully explored.

Conclusion

A compelling cost/benefit argument has not been identified to justify further consideration of any proposals that would involve or lead to transferring the delivery of public library services to the county level. Moreover, the findings of this admittedly cursory review suggest that the costs associated with creating a Grey County library

service would be disruptive to local municipal finances and significantly outweigh the perceived benefits at this time.

The CAO's review has suggested there may be merit in local municipalities and their public library boards exploring opportunities for greater collaboration, such as a shared library management system similar to the Perth County Information Network, that could more effectively achieve a uniform, integrated, and locally controlled and equitably accessible library system throughout the county.

While there may be a peripheral role for the County to play in any such future review, the resolve and leadership needed to find a workable and sustainable solution lies in a shared sense of urgency at the local municipal and public library board level.

Feedback on initial drafts of this report was received from the Chief Executive Officers of the library boards, some Board Chairs, the County Clerk and County Finance Director. The input received was insightful, much appreciated and has been reflected in this final version.

Respectfully submitted,

Lance Thurston, Chief Administrative Officer

**Appendix 1a
Comparative Data for Library Boards in Grey County 2010**

Library Board	Residents Served	Contract Population	Card Holders	Households Served	Service Points	Weekly Hours Per Branch	Service Pts Per 1,000 Population	Provincial Operating Funding	Local Operating Funding	Other Funding Sources	Local Support Per Household	Operating Expenditure per Capita	Total Operating Expenditures	Total Volumes
Blue Mountains	6,835	0	4,228	6,730	1	52	0.2	\$21,060	\$ 529,588	\$ 34,052	\$ 78.69	\$ 30.51	\$ 584,700	37,835
Grey Highlands	8,405	0	4,811	5,303	3	26.2	0.4	\$ 21,517	\$ 203,142	\$ 77,992	\$ 38.31	\$ 36.01	\$ 302,651	43,872
Hanover	7,147	0	3,466	3,562	1	61	0.1	\$ 14,313	\$ 423,000	\$ 57,842	\$ 125.82	\$ 69.28	\$ 495,155	30,706
Meaford	10,005	0	4,110	5,429	1	39	0.1	\$ 23,935	\$ 433,200	\$ 37,025	\$ 79.79	\$ 49.39	\$ 494,160	32,374
Southgate	7,167	346	1,635	2,723	1	35	0.1	\$ 11,537	\$ 65,999	\$ 27,776	\$ 25.73	\$ 14.02	\$ 105,312	12,610
West Grey	12,193	0	1,673	5,574	4	17.8	0.3	\$ 24,190	\$ 194,892	\$ 40,041	\$ 34.96	\$ 21.25	\$ 259,123	37,304
O.S.& N.G.	38,709	0	14,497	16,916	1	71	0.0	\$ 75,980	\$ 1,027,379	\$ 211,677	\$ 60.73	\$ 33.97	\$ 1,315,036	83,776
Total	90,461	346	34,420	46,237	12	43	0.2	\$192,532	\$ 2,877,200	\$ 486,405	\$ 63.43	\$ 36.35	\$ 3,556,137	278,477

Percentage Funded locally 80%
 Local Support per Household \$25.73 - \$125.82
 Expenditures per Capita 14.02 - 69.28

Appendix 1b
Comparative Usage for Library Boards in Grey County 2010

Library Board	Annual Library Transactions	In- Library Materials Use Per Capita	Total Visits Per Capita	Visits Electronic Visits	Visits In Person Visits	Librarians	Total Staff
Blue Mountains	77,879	0.75	10.49	18,050	53,550	1.14	5.14
Grey Highlands	112,365	0.92	5.89	2,850	46,650	0	4.89
Hanover	109,800	2.18	11.51	9,650	72,600	1.03	5.54
Meaford	88,574	1.01	4.51	10,400	34,700	1	6.43
Southgate	25,961	0.27	2.82	150	21,000	0	1.17
West Grey	73,376	1.48	2.81	-	34,250	1	3.43
O.S.& N.G.	302,340	5.76	8.39	83,050	241,600	3	15
Total	790,295	1.77	6.63	124,150	504,350	7.17	41.6

Appendix 2

2010 County Library Board Selected Statistics

	Resident Population Served	Card Holders	No Service Points	Service Pts per 1000 Population	Library Visits/Capita	Operating Hours/wk	Annual Transactions	Volumes Held	Operating Expenditures	Provincial Funding	Local Funding	Expenditures per capita	Paid staff/Service Point	Public Access Computers	Local Operating Support/Capita	Librarians	Total Staff
Bruce	60,264	17,927	19	0.32	3.54	515	774,240	206,007	\$ 3,427,702	\$ 188,487	\$ 2,597,739	\$ 57	1.98	60	43.11	2	37.71
Elgin	49,241	13,716	11	0.22	6.7	320.5	1,176,914	158,862	\$ 2,478,260	\$ 116,739	\$ 2,181,278	\$ 50	2.57	43	44.3	4.26	28.27
Essex	176,642	36,895	14	0.08	4.08	468	1,504,424	355,501	\$ 4,401,359	\$ 287,721	\$ 4,141,000	\$ 25	3.45	90	23.34	4.93	48.33
Huron	57,131	19,937	13	0.23	5.29	416	569,101	259,016	\$ 2,680,625	\$ 146,390	\$ 2,274,048	\$ 47	2.31	75	39.8	4.23	30.03
Lambton	128,204	33,424	34	0.27	7.32	747	1,407,672	451,906	\$ 6,199,901	\$ 283,948	\$ 4,785,912	\$ 48	2.36	120	37.33	9.54	80.2
L&A	38,842	8,079	8	0.21	2.96	183	284,005	97,164	\$ 1,389,643	\$ 93,351	\$ 1,146,695	\$ 36	1.69	58	29.52	0	13.54
Middlesex	73,341	21,430	18	0.25	3.69	371.5	651,734	187,516	\$ 2,698,995	\$ 134,047	\$ 2,329,194	\$ 37	1.42	75	31.76	4.5	25.56
Oxford	46,762	12,579	13	0.28	10.2	295.5	571,163	210,931	\$ 2,942,697	\$ 115,219	\$ 2,523,216	\$ 63	2.32	53	53.96	3.8	30.17
Wellington	93,636	40,485	14	0.15	0.94	596	1,284,824	330,433	\$ 4,450,507	\$ 152,454	\$ 4,321,877	\$ 48	6.19	74	46.16	2.6	13.23
Average	80,451	22,719	16	0.22	4.97	434.72	913,786	250,815	\$ 3,407,743	\$ 168,706	\$ 2,922,329	45.57	2.70		38.809	3.98	34.12
Grey	90,461	34,420	12	0.20	6.63	58	790,295	278,477	\$ 3,556,137	\$ 192,532	\$ 2,877,200	36.35	3.46		63.43	7.17	41.6